

Remarks

Claim 1-4, 6-9, 11-25, 32-42, 45 and 73-77 are pending in the application, claims 75-77 are withdrawn, claims 1-4, 6-9, 12-25 and 73-74 are allowed, and claims 11, 32-42 and 45 are rejected. By this Amendment, applicants have canceled claims 11, 35, 37 and 75-77 and have requested that claims 32, 36, 39-42 and 74 be amended to place the present application in condition for allowance.

I. Withdrawn Claims 75-77

Applicants have canceled claims 75-77, withdrawn from consideration following applicants' prior election, to place the present application in condition for allowance. Applicants reserve the right to file divisional and/or continuation applications to prosecute claims having the features of canceled claims 75-77.

II. Objected to Claim 36, 39-42 and 74

Claims 36 and 39-42 have been amended to recite "system" instead of --apparatus-- as suggested by the Examiner.

Claim 74 has been amended to change "modifying apparatus" to --modifier-- as suggested by the Examiner.

Applicants request that the objection to claims 36, 39-42 and 74 be withdrawn in view of applicants' requested amendments.

III. Claim 11 and 37 C.F.R. § 1.75(c)

Claim 11 has been canceled without prejudice. However, the hot gas distribution system recited in claim 1 can comprise plural paired gas cells, and further not all such cells require having shrouds placed adjacent thereto to provide a functioning apparatus. Rather, the claims pending in the application following entry of this amendment include embodiments having one or more pairs of gas cells, where at least one pair of cells is surrounded by shrouds, where more than one pair but less than all pairs are surrounded by shrouds, and where all paired cells are surrounded by shrouds.

IV. 35 U.S.C. § 112, Second Paragraph

Claims 11, 35 and 37 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as allegedly being indefinite. Applicants have canceled these claims without prejudice, and reserve the right to file continuing applications having claims with features currently recited in the canceled claims. The rejection cited under Section 112, second paragraph, should be withdrawn in view of applicants' amendments.

V. Claims 32-42 and 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

Claims 32-42 are rejected as allegedly being obvious under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a). Applicants traverse this rejection and request that it be withdrawn.

Applicants have requested that claim 32 be amended to recite --consolidation apparatus further comprising shrouds that substantially surround at least one pair of the plural paired gas cells.-- The Examiner has indicated, and applicants concur, that the prior art does not teach or suggest positioning shrouds adjacent the gas distribution cells recited in the claims of the present

application. As a result, applicants believe that the Section 103 rejection has been addressed by the amendment to claim 32 and hence request that the rejection of claim 32 be withdrawn.

Claims 32-42 depend from claim 32 and are allowable for the reasons stated above for claim 32, and are further allowable in view of the patentable combination of features recited in such claims.

VI. Rejection of Claim 45 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

Claim 45 is rejected as allegedly being obvious under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a). Applicants traverse this rejection and request that it be withdrawn.

In a manner similar to the amendments discussed above, applicants request that claim 45 be amended to recite --consolidation apparatus comprising shrouds that substantially surround at least one pair of the plural paired rollers.-- This claim therefore is in condition for allowance.

The present application is in condition for allowance following entry of this amendment, and such action is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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